



Seattle Women's Commission

March 12, 2009

Dear City Council Members,

As members of Seattle Women's Commission, we recognize the great stake that women have in the apparel industry comprising 85% of garment workers both in the US and abroad. According to the Department of Labor 50% of sewing shops in the US could be considered sweatshops with rampant health and safety violations, forced overtime and non-adherence to a minimum wage standard. To an even greater scale throughout Asia and Latin America there are sweatshops opening every day as more and more apparel production is outsourced from the US, and there is growing documentation of rampant sweatshops throughout Asia and Latin America.. As corporations move their operations overseas it is extremely difficult for consumers to know the means of production for items they purchase everyday. Therefore we advocate for supporting SweatFree Washington's Campaign to pass a SweatFree Purchasing Policy for the City of Seattle. Such a policy would insure that *tax payers in Seattle are not subsidizing sweatshop contractors and vendors through the procurement of basic needs for the city.*

The City of Olympia has already passed a SweatFree policy, joining over 180 states, cities, counties, and school districts nationwide that have adopted sweat-free policies. As a city with a long tradition of progressive values and a commitment to worker's rights, Seattle is overdue for this reform.

The proposed Seattle SweatFree ordinance includes the following provisions:

- A sweat-free code of conduct to be signed by all contractors, subcontractors and vendors which include:
 1. A living wage, adjusted by labor markets,
 2. Rights to assembly and collective bargaining;
 3. Non-discrimination and a ban on child labor;
 4. Safe working conditions;
- Enforcement by an independent (3rd party) monitor
- Commitment to a multi-city and state sweat-free policy consortium facilitated by SweatFree Communities
- Establishment of a Community Advisory Committee that includes workers rights advocates

In an era of the interdependent global economy wherein international corporate investments are tenuous, we must partake in a measure to insure that the consumer end of the commodity chain puts pressure on the production side to uphold healthy standards of human rights. In recognition of the tenets itemized above, we, the Seattle Women's Commission support the SweatFree Campaign, and implore you to support forthcoming legislation regarding a SweatFree Procurement Policy.

Respectfully,

Eboni Colbert

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